

in this respect, simply accelerated its
pace down 1 slippery slope.

But other and more specific charges
have been
brought against Christianity. One
is that it con-
tributed largely to the depopulation
of the Empire
which, from the point of view of the
State, was
evil of the very greatest magnitude.
The indictment
cannot be refuted wholly.
In the name
Christianity extravagant and
pernicious doctrines
were preached of which it would be
difficult to speak
with patience, did we not remember
that violent
disorders need violent remedies. No
one can do
the unutterable depravity and
viciousness which
were rampant and unashamed in the
Roman Empire
especially in the East. If there
was a public conscience
at all, it was silent.
Decent, clean-living
people held fastidiously aloof and
tolerated
existence of evils which they did
nothing to combat!
A strong protest was needed; it was
supplied
Christianity. But many of those
who took upon
themselves to denounce the sins
of the age
compelled to school themselves to a
rigid asceticism:
which made few allowances not only
for the weaknesses
but even for the natural
instincts of human
nature. The more fanatical among
them grudgingly
admitted that marriage was
honourable, but rose
enthusiastic frenzy in the
contemplation of virginity
which, if they dared not command,

they could ;
did commend with all the eloquence of
which tl
were capable. One cannot think
without pity
all the self-torture and agonising
which this r
asceticism—new, at least, in this
aggravated forr